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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR CHARLES RIES

C O R R E C T E D COPY TEXT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2014
TAGS: PREL PGOV GR CY TU VISIT
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER: YOUR APRIL 27 VISIT TO ATHENS

Classified By: Ambassador Charles P. Ries. Reasons 1.4(b/d).

- 11. (C) SUMMARY: Thank you for agreeing to make a quick stop in Athens on April 27. The Greek Government is delighted you are able to visit so soon after FM Bakoyannis' March 23 trip to Washington, and sees your visit as more proof of the deepening U.S.-Greece strategic partnership, or as Bakoyannis called it in Washington, "the historic relationship between the world's strongest democracy and the world's oldest democracy."
- 12. (C) Your stop here will emphasize to a skeptical Greek public the importance we attach to Greek participation in the Global War on Terror, in the broader Middle East, and in the region. It also gives us a chance to emphasize the interest we have in Greece's potential contribution to European gas security -- a "front burner" issue given Greece's role in two regional pipeline projects.
- 13. (C) To make these points, and to review the latest thinking on regional issues -- Cyprus and Kosovo, in particular -- we have arranged meetings with both Prime Minister Karamanlis and Foreign Minister Bakoyannis. We expect you will also take part in a press event and hope you will agree to a "Meet and Greet" event with the Embassy community. While this is your first visit to Greece as Secrtary of State (indeed, this is the first solo SecState visit to Greece since 1993), we want to present this visit to the Greeks not as a unique event but as part of a continuum of U.S.-Greek consultations. END SUMMARY.
- 14. (C) Your visit is well-timed to enlist Greece's contributions to transformational diplomacy -- with the emphasis on securing Greek help for a number of key objectives in the Eastern Med. Bakoyannis can be an excellent partner in this regard -- she has made one of her own priorities to transform Greek attitudes about the United States. Both transformations are necessary to shore up this important corner of Europe, where the ethnic rivalries in ex-Yugoslavia, Cyprus and the Middle East have often collided. In an April 18 meeting with me, Bakoyannis outlined the following as likely topics for discussion with you:

THE BALKANS: As the 2005-2006 Chair of the Southeast European Cooperation Process (SEECP), Greece hosted SEECP consultations with the Contact Group April 5 to discuss the Kosovo status negotiations, and the supporting role to be played by the states in the region. On April 18 USG Special Envoy Frank Wisner was in Athens for similar consultations. Both visits are the fruit of hard work by the Greeks to become a constructive player in the region, and, indeed, Greece -- as the largest investor in the Balkans -- has a long-term interest in supporting the democratization and

economic growth of its neighbors. That said, Frank Wisner had a tough meeting with FM Bakoyannis, who continued to argue for a slower approach to a Kosovo solution, saying that much more needs to be done by the international community to keep Belgrade on board. She believes that Serbia's nascent democracy will not be able to withstand both Montenegro's and Kosovo's independence in the same year. Both she and Wisner, however, did agree to fully and publicly support the next phase of UN Envoy Ahtisaari's work.

-- You should welcome Greece's interest in supporting a post-settlement Kosovo, particularly in terms of the tangible assistance Greece could provide to Kosovo's Serbs. The Greeks need to be reminded, however, that a drawn-out negotiating process is not in the interests of stability in the region. NOTE: Either/both the PM and FM will raise the Macedonia name issue, although we suspect it will be mainly for the record. We continue to support the UN-led process under Matt Nimetz. The Greeks appear to believe the Macedonians may be ready to deal following their elections this year. END NOTE.

GREECE-TURKEY-CYPRUS: Both the PM and FM will tell you they continue to support Turkey's EU accession "in spite of" Ankara's intransigence on Aegean issues and its refusal to reopen the Halki Seminary. Turkey's recent decision to meet a Hamas delegation, in the face of EU consensus to keep Hamas isolated, was seen here as an worrying indication of how Turkish interests can diverge from those of the EU. On Cyprus, Bakoyannis will want to present more evidence, as a result of her April 6 trip to Nicosia, that Papadopoulos is committed to reunifying the island. She understands that unless a way can be found for Turkey to open its ports and airports to Cyprus this year, the EU-Turkey accession process will be endangered. The Greek foreign ministry told us that one other element of her April 6 consultations in Nicosia was to meet with top Greek Cypriot clergy to stress how the two sides can live together.

-- Our goal is to enlist Greek help to avoid a trainwreck between the two sputtering engines of Turkey's EU accession and a Cyprus settlement. Turkey's recent package of political reforms (announced April 12) includes a law on minority foundations that would allow non-Muslim communities to reclaim property expropriated by the Turkish state. Bakoyannis told me that this legislation might provide Greece with a mechanism to solve Greek-Turkish disputes over the status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul in a way that would facilitate Turkey's EU accession, and she will be interested in what you heard on this topic in Ankara. It would be useful to hear more of her thinking on the way forward on Cyprus, as well as her ideas for interfaith dialogue on the island.

DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS: In her meetings in Washington, Bakoyannis discussed her desire to promote a dialogue of civilizations, and has her eye on opportunities to use Athens as a bridge between the western and Muslim worlds. Since her return, Bakoyannis has pushed for the opening of a mosque in downtown Athens.

-- Athens is the only EU capital without a mosque, although 10 percent of Greece's population is now Muslim (mostly Albanian, but Athens is home to as many as 100,000 economic migrants from the broader Middle East). Bakoyannis' remarks may have prompted an announcement by the Orthodox Church that it will turn over property for the construction of the first Muslim cemetery in Athens. PM Karamanlis' offer to host a BMENA ministerial event is still on the table, and you could explore with both the PM and FM how Athens might support greater outreach to the Middle East.

AFGHANISTAN: Greece has an engineering unit and a medical facility in Kabul, and will lead the ISAF HQ battalion in 12008. The British general in charge of ISAF operations told us that the Greeks were doing a good job, notwithstanding some language difficulties. He had wanted, however, to put a Greek engineering officer in charge of NATO infrastructure in

the country, but was frustrated by Greece's national caveat preventing its troops from operating outside Kabul.

-- Greece can, and should, do more in Afghanistan. We are interested in sharing more ideas about how Greece could take on responsibility for a PRT in the north. You might mention the need to lift national caveats, especially as Greek troops are sought after for important NATO responsibilities.

IRAN: Greece has been a staunch supporter of our goal to get Iran to stop its enrichment program. Faced with Ahmadinejad's April 11 announcement that Iran had "joined the nuclear club," Greece, as a non-permanent member of the UNSC and a member of the Board of Governors of the IAEA, gives every indication of being in sync with the EU3. Greece supports work in New York on a Chapter VII resolution, and is supportive in discussions of sanctions at the EU level.

-- We have appreciated the willingness of senior Greek policymakers to work with us at every step of the way since last September's IAEA meeting to the ongoing work in the UNSC. You can keep Greece firmly in our camp by sharing with Bakoyannis our thinking on next steps.

ENERGY SECURITY: Greece has just completed a link-up with the Turkish natural gas grid, and is committed to a transit pipeline to Italy. When completed, such a pipeline would represent the first non-Russian controlled route for Caspian natural gas to Western Europe. As a result, in March, Greece found itself in the cross hairs of an intense Gazprom-led effort to lock-up the pipeline with a long-term contract exclusively for Russian natural gas. To get its way, Russia has not hesitated to play its many cards with Greece -- it is the source of 80 percent of the country's natural gas supplies through 2016, and can play a key role in the financing of the Burgas-Alexandroupoli Bosphorus-bypass oil pipeline from Bulgaria to Greece, which the Greeks very much want to see constructed. The Russians have pushed their energy agenda at a very high level, with recent visits to Athens by Gazprom Chair Alexei Miller followed quickly by that of Russian FonMin Lavrov. Although Greece relies on Russian goodwill in the short-medium term, it has nonetheless shown itself receptive to putting Caspian gas into the Turkey-Greece-Italy Interconnector. EUR DAS Bryza had a very successful visit to Athens March 30-31 to provide top government and private sector energy players with information and support to push back against Russian/Gasprom pressure.

-- As you did in Washington, you should underscore our support for Greece's efforts to play a constructive role within Europe on energy, and to urge the Greeks to find a way to allow Azeri gas through to Europe.

EMBASSY ANNEX

daily.

15. (SBU) Construction of the new Embassy Annex is well underway and is on-time and on-budget. It will be completed by spring of 2007. The project will cost approximately USD 40 million, of which roughly USD 10 million will be awarded to Greek companies through construction-related contracts and services employing 200 local construction workers during the two years. Once completed, this facility will give us state-of-the-art capability for our consular, commercial and public affairs sections, which serve more than 200 visitors

-- A note on consular affairs: Bakoyannis will raise again Greece's quiet campaign to be included in the Visa Waiver Program, an issue she discussed in many of her meetings in Washington, and one which is dear to her heart. Greece has recently rolled out a new, high-security, biometric passport, and will soon start issuing secure diplomatic and official passports. We understand all the old passports will be out of circulation by the end of the year. Recent data appears to show that Greece meets VWP overstay and visa refusal criteria. Greece is the only Schengen member among VWP

aspirants. I have told Bakoyannis that DHS had not yet begun to review possible new VWP participants, and that we should work closely together to achieve progress and manage expectations.

PRESS DURING YOUR VISIT

- 16. (C) The Greek media is generally viewed as sensationalist, irresponsible, and anti-American, even by Greeks. Nearly every day we read stories of imagined or exaggerated U.S. attempts to control Greece's domestic political scene, pressure Greece into supporting U.S. interests in the region, secure oil supplies for Americans, or subvert the rights of Americans and/or non-Americans in some part of the globe. By far the best means to set the record straight on U.S. interests and activities are interviews with high-ranking USG officials.
- 17. (C) For your visit, we are recommending an interview with ERT (Greek state television), which makes a decent effort to present balanced news. In a one-on-one interview with ERT's well-regarded diplomatic correspondent, we anticipate serious, sober questions about the strategic partnership with Greece, Greek-Turkish-Cyprus relations, the Macedonian name issue, Kosovo, Iran, Iraq, and the Visa Waiver Program. (These are also the issues that will come up during your joint press availability with the FM at the Foreign Ministry.) We expect portions of the interview to run during the national evening news on ERT, with other stations using portions in their broadcasts. The interview in its entirety would be run the following day on ERT.
- 18. (C) NOTE: The phone-tapping scandal that began February 2, when the government confirmed that cell phones belonging to high-ranking officials had been tapped by unknown agents, is very much alive. There is widespread speculation that the U.S. is the perpetrator. Karamanlis and Bakoyannis are determined not to let this belief impede our bilateral cooperation, and neither are likely to raise this issue with you. We have not commented on the allegations or the ongoing investigation. END NOTE.

SECURITY DURING YOUR VISIT

19. (C) There is a strong possibility that there will be one or more demonstrations by both leftist groups and anarchists during your visit. We have every expectation that the Hellenic Police will exercise tight control over their movements. There are no other indications of any threat to you or your delegation by any known terrorist groups. We will monitor both situations closely. Ries